

Mike is My Whole World by **isabellamallozzi**

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Summary: Takes place a few months after the end of Season 2, when Spencer (another gifted child experimented on by Hawkins Lab) is discovered in the area. He quickly befriends El, but Hopper fears this new bond will interfere with her adjustment to normal life. How will Spencer's presence impact the relationship between Mike and El? Primarily Mileven, some Mucas & Stancy

1. Chapter 1

It had been one month since El closed the gate and everyone was finally beginning to accept the normalcy. The boys and Max went back to school after the holiday break and El started studying basic material in the hopes of joining for the next school year. She didn't enjoy learning algebra nearly as much as new words, but she was eager to spend the weekdays with her friends at school someday. Mike was with her every waking moment he wasn't in class and they slowly made up for the year they lost. All seemed well and, eventually, they all put their guards down. It wasn't until an early May morning when Dr. Owens called Hopper that things took an unexpected turn.

El paid his phone call no mind as she reached up on her tiptoes to obtain the maple syrup on the third shelf. As she joined Hopper at the breakfast table (Eggs in hand), she noted his odd expression but quickly dismissed it as annoyance to be bothered before noon. She happily chewed her daily delicacy and gazed out the window at two birds, one chasing the other. She only allowed his conversation to penetrate her thoughts when his voice raised.

"Well find out what he knows and call me back!" Hopper roared. El looked at him in concern, detecting the unease in his voice beyond simple anger. He slammed the phone down onto the receiver and pushed his chair angrily away from the table.

"What's wrong?" El asked, reaching out to touch his arm. Hopper's expression softened at her touch and he sighed heavily.

"That was Dr. Owen's." he began, his tone wavering in indecision. She peered at him with wide eyes, incredulous about the culprit for his hesitancy.

"They found a boy wandering around Hawkins Lab." he supplied simply, grimacing. El lightly squeezed his arm to express her confusion and mild impatience.

"His wrist reads '004'." as Hopper delivered the meaningful detail, his eyes scanned hers for any sense of fear. He didn't want her to feel an

obligation to be involved. He had been struggling to establish some semblance of a normal teenage life for her for months. She nodded slightly in understanding and her eyes glazed over for a moment. Her mind was enveloped in scattered memories of the horror she endured as a young child and her heart ached for the boy whose existence she only just learned of because she knew he likely faced the same treatment.

Hopper cupped her cheek with one of his warm hands, pulling her back to reality. His voice was gravelly as he continued to explain, "The kid isn't responding to any of their psychologists and they thought... maybe, (only if you want) you might try to speak with him."

She instinctively said "Yes," despite the gnawing anxiety in her stomach. Similar to her experience with Kali, she longed for a piece of her past; a person who shared her experiences and understood her perspective. Hopper grumbled, "Yeah, I was afraid of that." but affectionately ruffled her dark curls.

"Will we be back for this afternoon?" Eleven asked, trying to mask her apprehension as mere curiosity. She only saw Mike twice during the school week, Mondays and Wednesdays (today). Hopper grumbled louder as he dialed Dr. Owens back, but included a quiet affirmation. El covered her immediate beam with her palm and wondered what meeting this new boy would be like.

When they pulled up to the security gate at Hawkins Lab, Hopper gave her hand a reassuring squeeze. He had to jump out and press the 'unlock' button himself since the facility was seldom used anymore. Dr. Owens maintained access to the building and its files, but she doubted that fact was common knowledge. The doctor met them near the entrance and led them up four flights of stairs to the hospital wing. The last time Hopper stood on this floor Will was flung over his shoulder and they were running for their lives. He automatically pulled El closer to him, grateful he no longer needed to fear for her safety.

The building was largely empty, but this particular wing contained a few doctors and nurses who quickly came in and out of a room at the

end of the hallway. El presumed *he* was in there and again, tried to quench the gnawing in her stomach.

"I'll be right outside if you need me, kid." Hopper declared, more to the doctors than her and they nodded in agreement. El swallowed thickly and, as she made her way down the hallway, suddenly wished Mike was beside her. There were very few obstacles she had to face without him lately and he had become almost a natural extension of her. Much to Hopper's dismay, El was constantly in his embrace when they were together. She smiled, imagining the feeling of his arms around her. Up until this point in her life, she had never found a place where she felt truly safe. When she finally did, it turned out to be the transient location of Mike's chest.

She rounded the corner and saw him for the first time. He had tawny brown hair and alert, wide-set blue eyes. He seemed relatively apathetic to her presence and as she slowly walked over to the chair across from his, she felt mildly self-conscious. He scanned her over and she exhaled a little when he gave her a small smile.

"I remember you." he spoke quietly and her heart panged at how sickly he appeared. She struggled to place him in all of the memories she carried from her time there but couldn't recall ever seeing him. She felt guilty for not remembering him as well and debated "fibbing" (a word Dustin taught her for justified lying).

"I-" she began, but he held up his hand. "You don't remember me. It's okay. We were little when I left." His eyes were sad and he held a delicate, kind smile. She wracked her brain for the earlier moments, but they were mostly full of pain and loud noises.

"They kept you in the water for so long. I thought you would die," he said, his voice strained in sympathy. "I thought I could get you out, but Brenner..." he trailed off and his head hung, as if he was embarrassed. El gasped as a fragment of the past enveloped her.

Her lungs burned and her limbs were struggling futilely to push her upward, even as she felt the hard ceiling pushing down against her skull. Her vision was distorted underwater, but she heard the yelling. Brenner turned from observing her to look at the young boy. His face was blurry, but she could just make out his bronze-colored head. He was swinging at

Brenner and she watched in horror as the many lab workers converged upon him. She saw him, bloodied and unmoving, as he was dragged away, before her senses went from the lack of oxygen.

When she came back to the present, she was confused by the liquid on her face. She seldom succumbed to the urge to cry, but she felt angry and pained staring at the boy who risked his life for her. He saw the realization dawn on her face and gave her a weak chuckle.

"Yeah, I was a hot shot back then. Fearless and stupid," he commented, with a boyish grin.

"Brave," she corrected impulsively. His smile widened and he mumbled thanks as she reached out to turn over his wrist. He didn't stop her, but he sucked in a breath of apprehension at her touch. He shied away from most contact, but he somehow sensed her kind intentions and remained still.

She lightly traced the '004' and he felt the need to correct its implication. "Spencer. That's my name," he clarified.

"Spencer," she tested it aloud and nodded in approval. She suddenly felt as if they went entirely out of order. She stuck out her hand in introduction.

"Jane," she replied and he shook her hand gently.

They spent the next several hours getting to know one another and, just after one o'clock, Dr. Owens brought in sandwiches for them. Spencer detailed the events which took place from his fight with Brenner until the present. He was an incredibly poor behaved subject for Dr. Brenner and eventually was removed from the lab entirely. One of the lab associates took him to Europe and sold him to a Soviet spy in exchange for intel. He spent many years on the Communist side of the world, using his 'gift' for them. He possessed the ability to tell if someone was speaking the truth and to force them to do so. This power was invaluable to the Soviet commanders and therefore, he was often tortured until he used it. When one of the officials came to him and confessed their spy status for America, he knew they were being truthful. The man helped him escape to America and he saw

media coverage on the Hawkins Lab. It took him several months to reach there, relying primarily on the kindness of strangers as a means of transport. He hoped to find more people like him and was relieved when he discovered Dr. Owens and saw his pure intentions.

El was mesmerized by his story and she felt an automatic kinship with him. When the time came for her to leave, she refused unless Spencer could come as well. Hopper was wildly uncomfortable with such an agreement and, after a heated argument, he reluctantly called Joyce to see if the boy could stay there. Ms. Byers, of course, happily agreed to take Spencer in, holding a soft spot for Eleven and all of the children who were exploited by Hawkins Lab.

El instinctively gave Spencer a hug goodbye and he flinched in surprise. She pulled back immediately with apologetic eyes. He tried to recover and gave her a warm smile, "Bye Jane." She smiled back and promised to visit Will's house the following day. Hopper felt fiercely protective of his adoptive daughter, but he rationalized that it was good for both of them to have someone who understood their shared trauma. He was quiet on the drive home, not pressing her to talk about it. She seemed calm for the most part, but he saw her stress brewing just beneath the surface.

"Hey," he began gently. "I know you lo- *like* Mike, but there is nothing wrong with having Spencer as a friend." She nodded appreciatively and reached over to squeeze his hand. When they pulled up to the cabin, Mike was already sitting on the porch. He beamed and hurried down the steps when he saw them approaching. El always felt a warmth in her chest when she saw him, but she still couldn't escape that gnawing in her stomach as she slid from the passenger seat onto the gravel.

2. Chapter 2

Once they all stepped in the cabin, Hopper glanced between the two of them and debated his next course of action. The proper thing to do would be go help Joyce set up for the kid and check on things down at the station. The fatherly thing to do would be sit across from them and scrutinize their every interaction. Both halves warred within him until he saw Eleven sit peacefully next to Mike, resting her head on his shoulder. Her eyes closed and he visibly saw the tension leave her shoulders. He knew she would be safe with Mike and that he would never hurt her. He reluctantly announced that he would be back in one hour and they were to behave, ignoring the look El gave him.

She leaned into Mike's shoulder and breathed in his scent. Her mind was reeling from the events of today, but she reminded herself that Mike was unequivocally on her side. He could feel her trembling slightly in his arms and he absently ran his fingers through her hair. She allowed that feeling and the sound of his heartbeat beneath her ear to calm her.

"El, what's going on?" he ventured quietly, not ceasing his movements. She lifted her head and met his eyes, wanting to convey how much she cared about him. She took his hand in hers and squeezed.

"I met someone today," she began, panting slightly with guilt she couldn't understand the source of. Mike heard her quickened breaths and placed a hand on her chest, over her racing heart. She winced a little and he was taken aback by her response. He cupped her cheek and stared at her in concern.

"El, please tell me what's wrong." She leaned into his hand on her face, relishing in the warmth it brought her.

"You are..." she struggled to find the right word for what he meant to her. He waited patiently, seeing her effort to search for what she wanted to say. She took his hand away from her face and lowered it back over her heart. "In here. You are in my heart." she concluded, still not content with her articulation of her feelings. Mike nodded and pecked her cheek to convey his understanding, but she knew he

wasn't getting it.

"Dustin and Lucas and Max are not here." she stated, pressing his palm tighter against her. He beamed at her, not processing her distress. She kept his hand there and tried again, "Spencer is not here."

She watched his face contort- first in confusion and then jealousy. "Spencer." he repeated slowly, the word sounding more like a curse than a name.

"He was hurt by Papa like me." she whispered, their faces inches apart. His jealous attitude faded and was replaced by an emotion she couldn't interpret. He loosened his hand from her grip and let it fall in his lap, staring past her at the wall.

"He's my friend." she clarified again, but Mike didn't seem to hear her. His eyes were distant and she felt her stomach drop as they clouded with tears.

"Elle, I can't..." he tried to swallow the lump in his throat. "I can't compete with that." He finished in just a whisper and she almost doubted she had heard him correctly. She acted on instinct and pulled him toward her.

El never got over the feeling of kissing Mike; it wasn't something she could get used to over time. With each kiss, there was a new wave of euphoria that washed over her as perfect and inexplicable as the first time.

When she pulled back and stared him in the eye, he was overcome by the look of adoration on her face. "*You saved me.*" she said fiercely, squeezing his shoulders. "*You make me feel okay. You are in my heart.*" The adamant insistence in her voice filled him up and abolished his doubts. *She loved him.*

Driven by the sense of confidence she instilled in him, he leaned forward and kissed her temple before whispering in her ear, "I love you too, El."

"Yes!" she exhaled in relief. "I love you." Mike laughed at her joy in

finally articulating her thoughts. She said it forcefully upon discovering the phrase and blushed at his reaction, burying her face in his neck. He didn't tease her about it and silently slipped his arms around her. They stayed that way for sometime and eventually, Mike wondered if she had fallen asleep. When they heard the roar of Hopper's truck approaching, they both scrambled apart and El moved an 'appropriate' distance away from him on the couch. Mike switched on the TV and feigned interested when Hopper entered a moment later.

"Hey kids," he said in a good-natured tone. He appraised their positions and deemed them acceptable, convincing himself they were actually in those distant spots since he had left. He put the milk and cold-cuts in the fridge and the Eggos in the freezer. Mike gathered his things in anticipation of leaving. El felt her chest tighten, constantly fearing she wouldn't see him again. Hopper pretended to ignore them as he put out dinner, but kept a careful ear on their conversation.

Mike looked at her and saw her pain at separating. He leaned down and whispered in her ear, "Just forty-eight hours and I'll be back."

She nodded glumly, but he saw a gleam in her eye. She pulled him back down to her and whispered back, "I love you Mike." She wanted to test out her new powers and his response was to lightly kiss her without thinking. She forgot to breathe for a minute and she only registered the outside world when Hopper groaned in the background.

"Get out while you still have two legs," he muttered and that was Mike's cue. El watched him descend the porch steps and ride away. She looked up at the setting sun and felt like a regular girl for the first time. She was safe and in love and nothing else mattered. As she headed back into the house for the night, her daze distracted her senses from detecting the presence just fifty feet away in the bushes.